Financing of elections

750. SHRI DINKARRAO GOVINDRAO PATIL:

SHRI K. VASUDEVA PANICKER:

SHRI SURESH PACHOURI.

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have proposal under their consideration for public financing of elections or public funding of political parties to ensure cleaner elections to Lok Sabha and Assemblies, if so, the details thereof;

(b) by when the proposal would be given effect to;

(c) whether a number of suggestions have been obtained from the various parties; and

(d) if so, by what time the final decision for funding the poll will be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H. R. BHARDWAJ): (a) to (d) There is no proposal under consideration at present for State funding of elections The Election Commission has only suggested that the election expenditure may be shared partly in kind through supply of free copies of rolls, free mailing of election literature, etc. The Commission has reiterated this view recently and suggested that in the existing circumstances public financing of elections may be only in kind. In making this suggestion, the Election Commission has taken note of the views of the various political parties. The suggestion of the Commission is still under examination and it is not feasible at this stage to indicate the time frame by which a final decision in the matter could be arrived at.

Supply of newsprint to newspapers

751. PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether representations have been received by Governmnt from the Indian and Eastern Newspapers Society regarding recent steep hike in the price of newsprint cuasing an unbearable burden on the newspapers;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether the working of the public sector units manufacturing newsprint had been thoroughly investigated before deciding to increase the price of newsprint;

(d) if so, what is the outcome of the investigations; and

(e) what measures are proposed to be taken by Government to ensure supply of adequate quantities of newsprint to the newspapers at reasonable prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) and (b) Representations have been received from the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society stating that the recent increase in the price of indigenous newsprint has adversely affected the economic viability of the newspaper industry, and that it should be withdrawn.

(c) and (d) The claims of the indigenous newsprint manufacturers for revision of their ex-mill prices on account of the escalations in the cost of raw materials and other inputs were got examined by the BICP before Government decided to permit the price increase. A large part of the escalations in costs claimed by the manufacturers was on account of the increases in royalties, hikes in power raw materials and related taxes, increases in royalties, hikes in power rates and increases in tax on self-

generated power. The views of the representatives of IENS with regard to the review of price of indigenous newsprint were also taken into account by the BICP while finalising their recommendations on the increase to be allowed to the indigenous manufacturers.

(e) As a result of the various measures taken by Government in the past, installed capacity for manufacture of newsprint has increased from the level of 75,000 tonnes in 1981 to 2.30 lakh tonnes in 1985. The indigenous industry is working to more than 90 per cent capacity utilisation. An additional capacity to the extent of 7.46 lakh tonnes has been approved, which is in various stages of implementation. In order to make up the short fall in indigenous supply of newsprint, sizeable quantities of newsprint are being imported. While the prices of imported newsprint is fixed on the recommendation of the Newsprint Price Fixation Advisory Committee, the indigenous newsprint manufacturers are allowed to charge only the normative prices as recommended by the BICP.

752. [Transferred to the 6th March, 1986].

Regularisation of the Casual Workers in the Telephone Department

753. SHRI SURAJ PRASAD:
SHRI N. E. BALRAM:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Federation of Posts and Telegraphs Employees has protested against the indifferent attitude of the authorities towards the regularisation of 80,000 casual workers and 10,000 reserved Trained Pool staff working in the Telephone department all over the country;

(b) whether the General Secretaries of different unions were on hunger strike about these and other demands;

(c) if so, what are their demands; and

(d) the steps taken to redress the grievances?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) Yes, Sir; the NFP&T organised an agitation in Delhi to press for their various demands relating to regularisation of casual labour & RTP Staff etc.

(b) Yes, some office bearers were on hunger strike.

(c) Their main demands were: Regularisation of casual labourers, Reserve Training Pool Staff and connected issues.

(d) The issues involved were discussed in a joint meeting between the representatives of the Unions and Administrative side and an agreement was arrived at. Necessary orders have been issued in fulfilment of the items of agreement.

Scheme regarding instant phones

754. SHRI M. KADHARSHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the details of the scheme regarding installation of instant phones for Rs. 25,000;

(b) what has been the response to this scheme since its inception; and

(c) whether Government propose to reduce the price of such a telephone to Rs. 15,000, if not, th reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) to (c) A proposal for introduction of 'Instant' scheme for provision of new telephone connections is under discussions with the Ministry of Law & Justice. No decision has yet been taken.